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An Appeal
for
Darwin East Timorese School

My name is Maria Fatima Gusumao. 1975 was the year of the invasion of my country E.T.. I was just 18 years of age. 5 months before, I had completed my year ten, high school level, and my ambition was to become a language teacher. So 7-12-1975 Indonesian troops invaded my beautiful country. I was in Dili, the capital of East Timor. When it happened I ran out from home together with my husband to the mountain where my husband joining the Fretilin fighters and I joining the Womans Organization, which we call O.P.M.T. it means Popular Organization of Timorese Woman. We did work a lot for ourselves, we were very well organized and helpful. During this brutal occupation, I lost my three children. They're all boys.

The first, died because no medical assistance at all, the birth was very difficult and few hours later, my baby passed away.

The second baby died in the jungle at 8 months of age. This happened at a time when the enemy had begun heavy bombardments and constant attacks causing mass destruction to our homes livelihoods. During these attacks confronted by our feelings, hopelessness, sadness, tiredness and while emotional wrecked we ran for cover and protection. In our hours of silence we prayed to God for his protection. Water from our rivers were dirty no good to drink. Throughout the jungles that I had passed, there were people wounded; sick, bones everywhere. Once more my second child died --lack of medical assistance and also lack of food.

My third baby was born after my capture only lived three days. He was born in the Dili Hospital in the care of Indonesian doctors and nurses. His body was returned to me with the justification that he would have lived if he had not been a child of Fretilin. Dear Japanese friends and others around the world, I am not the only one suffered and continue suffer this brutal invation. Every East Timorese

child had suffered and continues to suffer. In Dili, the capital of East Timor it is impossible to live a normal life. Children of your age are homeless. They have no parents to care for them, unemployed, without money and family support. They sleep in the street and public areas, with nowhere to go and many times sit through the day without food. I saw children go to school with bare feet and without school books. These difficulties are brought about by the corruption of the Jakarta government. In Australia our children have fight hard to unite in the struggle for a Free and Independent East Timor. This will always live in their hearts, I have heard from the East Timorese children many times, they say, we're proud to be East Timorese children. We're courageous and determined people. That's why mothers like me, we demand a guarantee future for our children. We want to learn more about our language, our history, our customs, and pass it from generation to generation.

We'd be very happy if you could help

us with some of your great donation to build up our East Timorese School in Darwin. Because we want to preserve our national identity.

Thank you very, very much.

God bless you always.